



Daily Message by the Minister for Foreign and European Affairs, Hon. Evarist Bartolo

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Recently a number of so-called quality newspapers that are published in leading European capitals carried a story claiming that in 2007, all of thirteen years ago, Dar Malta in Brussels was used by the Chinese to spy on European institutions.

A closer reading of the articles reveals that they had no news value and that they were not even based on fact.

What happened was that 13 years ago, during a Nationalist legislature, renovation and refurbishment works were carried out at Dar Malta.

At the time there was the fear that since a number of Chinese workers were involved in the project, these might take the opportunity to break into the EU computer system for espionage purposes.

But further investigations by Belgian security services over the years revealed that there had in fact been no espionage by the Chinese workers at Dar Malta. Dar Malta was never used for espionage purposes.

Which raises the question. Why did these so-called quality papers disinter this non-story that had been dead for 13 years, dress it up in a semblance of new clothing and try and bring it to life again. Why now?

There are those in Malta who speculate that it was done to pay us back and smear our reputation. To frighten us. To silence us and stop us trying to get the rest of the EU to take its share of the responsibility in the relocation of migrants trafficked from Libya, as they flee a war that Malta never started, is not involved in and does not supply arms to either side for.

Others speculated that it was a ploy to discourage Malta from keeping up good relations with China.

I'm not given to conspiracy theories or to blaming a hidden hand pulling strings behind the scene.

But I must admit I cannot understand why supposedly serious papers chose to publish a story that never happened.

From supposedly serious papers you would expect serious stories, well- investigated and built on facts.

I don't expect lazy journalism that tries to touch up a corpse that has been rotting for 13 years to look alive and fragrant.

Evarist Bartolo

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